

April 30, 2010

### **OBEY STATEMENT ON B.P. OIL SPILL**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Seventh District Congressman Dave Obey (D-WI) released the following statement today on the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico:

“The BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico demonstrates how dangerous it is to assume that because we have not had environmental disasters for a number of years, that we can afford to get careless in terms of protecting the most precious aspects of the environment.

The White House recently indicated their willingness to modify long-standing limitations on offshore oil drilling. Supporters of that action suggested that because the technology has changed, it has become safe to run risks associated with expanded offshore oil drilling. But in fact, while there have been no major, well-publicized disasters, there have been dozens of smaller episodes of accidents that produced oil spills.

We need to learn - all over again it seems - that in assessing potential damage to precious environmental areas that we cannot behave as though we are permanent presidents of Optimist Clubs. We need to be constantly aware of the worst case possibilities.

The same is true for nuclear power. While it is certainly much less damaging to the earth's climate balance than carbon based energy sources, it still holds the potential for catastrophes. We've not had a nuclear accident in many years, but the potential for one is just as real as was the potential for an offshore disaster. All it will take is one nuclear accident similar to that of Three Mile Island to remind us once again of the dangers of assuming that because we've been lucky in the past, we'll be lucky in the future.

That doesn't mean we should display unthinking resistance to offshore oil production or nuclear power production, because life involves trade-offs and a mature assessment of potential risks. But it does mean that we have a practical and moral obligation to greatly enhance our aggressiveness in pursuing alternative sources of energy production and our activities on the energy efficiency and conservation fronts. This spill shows that that is not just a feel good or wishful thinking approach to energy policy, it is a hard-nosed and hard-headed requirement if we do not want to foul our own nest as we have so many times in the past.

This also points out the need for corporate responsibility. It took 20 years for Exxon to finish its appeals on the 1989 Valdez disaster and, in the end, they only paid a fraction of the true costs of that disaster. So far it appears that BP is pursuing a more responsible course, but we must

keep on the case to make sure that parties responsible take the lead in cleaning it up.”

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